Components of Masonic Growth

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Brethren, Companions, Sir Knights, do we see the big picture of strengthening Freemasonry and our individual local groups? If we intend to grow and be a positive contributor to the world, then we need to go beyond the scope of our local Masonic Bodies. Each aspect or part of growth is like a spoke on a wheel. If there are no spokes, then the wheel is useless. Therefore, we need to examine how Masonic Education, Leadership/Officer Training, Innovation, Community Service, Masonic Management/Marketing are important spokes of a functioning wheel.

Masonic Education is more than just conveying Grand Body information at an Annual Official Visit. Yes, we need to know our ritual and floor work from schools of instruction but are we proficient enough to explain our historical backgrounds or to have discussions about what we are trying to convey to our members and to the world? If not, then we do not provide the value of what the members or future candidates are really seeking.

Do we really train our officer corps and develop strong leadership? Maybe yes or maybe no. Any organization needs strong leadership to survive. Without being innovative or progressive, there is a negative reaction. Thus, membership either does not happen or there is a rapid decline. Moreover, we need to start more interaction with our entire membership and future members by demonstrating our progressive activities, rather than the do it my way syndrome that because something was done in the past, there is no need to change our attitudes or methods.

Although change is hard to accept by some members, change is inevitable and what course we take will determine if we are going to survive or grow in the future or become like the Roman Empire and implode from within. Therefore, we need to constantly re-evaluate our positions and how we can grow stronger in the future. One way is to be adaptable to innovative ideas and methods of doing things. This brings us to look at what the most successful businesses do. They are always looking for ways to utilize good business practices. Today, we see more use of surveys than in the past because organizations...
need to know what their members consider of value so those successful organizations can make the necessary changes and become more cognizant of what is needed to be done. We all see the lack of attendance because nothing much is accomplished in too many organizations except for a monthly dinner and business meeting without any or infrequent continuing motivational and educational programs or outside activities. If the districts would combine programs, they would strengthen their respective positions within their communities and build a better image of themselves locally and for all of Freemasonry.

Again, the lack of innovation causes a breakdown in membership. Therefore, we need to constantly know and program our activities around what is considered of value by the members. Then, we balance those values with what we are teaching and innovating within our Masonic Bodies while adhering to our heritage of Freemasonry through the centuries of qualified leaders using good business practices, as well as the training of our local officer corps regarding leadership.

Another component is properly marketing our Masonic Bodies through their local communities. We need more engagement with our local communities to demonstrate what Freemasonry does, especially in the community. If we had more community projects on a consistent basis, then the attitudes from negative to positive will grow within the communities. This will then lead to more interest in and potential growth in membership. There have been many studies in the past about recognition of Masonic Emblems that have shown that the Square & Compass or other Masonic Emblems are less known than the Shrine Emblem. Why is that? Simply, the Shrine is always marketing itself on TV with its hospitals or in parades, etc. However, many people still do not know that Shriners are Masons but in recent years there has been more emphasis that the two are one.

Overseas, we see that Freemasonry has become publicly pro-active in many areas. England, Bulgaria, and China are terrific examples of Masonic marketing. Their local districts combine many community activities around local public charitable work. They have such programs as funding for hospice centers for adults and for children, donations of ambulances, fire trucks, hospital/medical helicopters, and wheelchairs to local organizations. There are Masonic Prostate Programs, Centers for the Homeless-places to live and learn a trade, Schools for the blind-children and adults, Trade school manuals, food delivery trucks that continually deliver free food to the less fortunate. Whatever is done has a Masonic Emblem on it and is donated by the District Masons apart from their normal Grand Lodge charitable donations.

Thus, there is a constant link between Freemasonry and the local community. Furthermore, the actions are always published within the local news media, besides the district or local lodge websites. The key element is that those are separate charitable programs from any Grand Lodge Charitable Fund that is specifically designated for Masons and the families of Masons. Therefore, Masonic Charity is truly extended to all.

Brethren, Companions, Sir Knights, again we see those spokes bringing us back into a positive light. They are all inter-related components of a functioning wheel. Therefore, you bear the responsibility of your own success or demise. The choice is yours alone.